Chapter 13

JUN MOCHIZUKI

THE CASE STUDY OF VANITAS

...UNFORTUNATELY, I'VE HAD MY HANDS FULL WITH WORK. I'M AFRAID I'VE KEPT YOU WAITING A VERY LONG TIME.
NO, UM ...
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
PERSONALLY, I WANTED TO SPEAK WITH YOU TWO IMMEDIATELY, BUT...

LUCA, WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T LET GO OF HIS HAND.
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!
NYON (STRETCH)
KYORO
KYORO (PEEK)
HEY. NOÉ. WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
...UCH!
THANK YOU VERY MU...
WE'RE TERRIBLY HONORED THAT YOU'VE TAKEN VALUABLE TIME TO MEET WITH US, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE VERY BUSY.

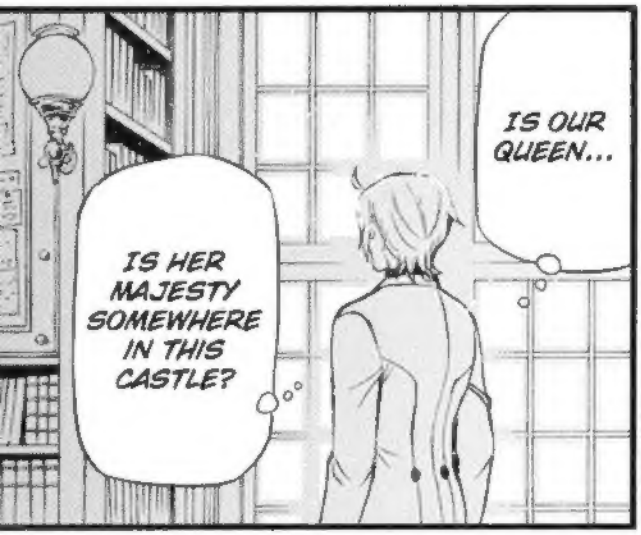
KII (CREAK)
COME ON IN.
ALL RIGHT.

JUN MOCHIZUKI

THE CASE STUDY OF VANITAS

Mémoire 13 Glissand GLISSANDO

THIS IS AMAZING.
TEACHER.


IS OUR QUEEN...
IS HER MAJESTY SOMEWHERE IN THIS CASTLE?

WE'RE CURRENTLY IN LORD RUTHVEN'S OFFICE AT CARBUNCULUS CASTLE.

I DO CALL IT MY OFFICE, BUT IT'S RATHER LIKE A HOBBY ROOM FOR ME.
MAKE YOUR-SELVES AT HOME.

YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT LORD RUTHVEN!?

PYU
PYU (SULK)
HE'S MORE THAN THAT!
...I KNOW HE'S A MEMBER OF THE SENATE.

DISGRACEFUL! THAT'S REALLY EMBARRASSING, NOÉ!!
SO I WAS HOPING YOU'D FILL ME IN...
UM.
YES.

THAT'S REALLY SOME-THING.
SERIOUSLY... YOU READ ALL THOSE BOOKS, AND YOU NEVER ONCE SAW LORD RUTHVEN'S NAME?
UNBE-LIEV-ABLE...
LORD RUTHVEN IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE BEHIND THE PEACE, A MODERATE WHO BROUGHT THE WAR BETWEEN VAMPIRES AND HUMANS TO A CLOSE.
EVEN NOW, THERE ARE MANY WHO SAY HE'S A HERO!

MAYBE I WILL GO WITH YOU, AFTER ALL.
...
NEVER MIND. I WAGER HE'LL WANT TO TELL YOU HIMSELF.
?
HUH ?
IN THAT CASE, I BET YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT MASTER LUCIUS EITHER, DO YOU...
MY FATHER AND THE OTHERS HAVE GOTTEN WORD OF THE SORRY DISPLAY I MADE OF MYSELF THE OTHER DAY, THAT'S ALL. I'M POSITIVE.
HUH ?
THIS.
PURU (BRR)
NOT A CHANCE.
YOU CAN'T, DOMI. THERE WAS THAT ABRUPT SUMMONS FROM THE HOUSE OF DE SADE.
IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO A FAMILY MEMBER...
WHY ARE YOU APOLO-GIZING?
...BUT I ENDED UP DRAGGING YOU INTO AN AWFUL MESS.
WHEN I BROUGHT YOU TO ALTUS, I MEANT WELL...
TON (TMP)
I'M SORRY, NOÉ.

IT MAKES ME REALLY HAPPY, YOU KNOW.

DOMI, YOU ALWAYS WORRY ABOUT ME.

... MM-HM.

LET'S MEET AGAIN, MON CHERI.
YES.
SOON.

IS SOMETHING WRONG?
NO.
NOTH-ING. I'M SORRY.
HA (GASP)
BOY.
...Y...
?
WHEN I HEARD YOU WERE THE SHAPELESS ONE'S CHILD, IT ALL MADE SENSE.
AH. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
I WAS JUST REMEMBERING DOMI HAD TOLD ME I COULDN'T POSSIBLY NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU.
HA HA
...YOUR TEACHER DETESTS ME!
HA HA
TO BE PERFECTLY FRANK...
HA
HA

... THAT ...

HE HATED EVEN SAYING MY NAME.
I DOUBT HE'D NEED MUCH OF A REASON TO STRIKE IT FROM ALL HIS BOOKS.

HA HA!
DOESN'T IT, THOUGH!
THAT DOES SOUND LIKE SOMETHING MY TEACHER MIGHT DO.

I DON'T ... KNOW ...
CHIRA
CHIRA (GLANCE)

HE CHANGES HIS NAME TO SUIT HIS CURRENT MOOD FREQUENTLY, DOESN'T HE?
I'M SORRY. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN NEARLY HALF A YEAR, SO...

SPEAKING OF NAMES, WHAT IS YOUR TEACHER CALLING HIMSELF NOW?

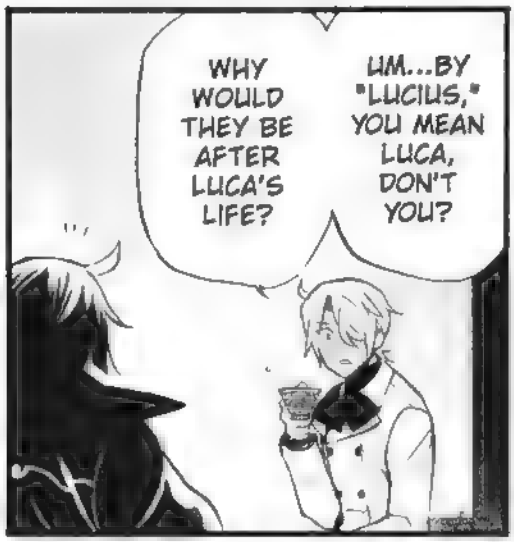
LORD RUTHVEN.
THIS ONE IS...
IT'S A DIFFERENCE ENGINE I GOT FROM MARQUIS MACHINA.
THIS IS A LIGHT THAT RUNS ON ASTERMITE.
KOKU (NOD)
KOKU
HM? DOES THIS MACHINE INTEREST YOU?
PYU (WHIRR)

SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR FUN, BUT...
...I'D LIKE TO GET TO THE MAIN TOPIC.
MY APOLOGIES. YOU'RE RIGHT.
NOÉ. VANITAS.
FIRST, LET ME THANK YOU FOR YOUR COURAGEOUS ACTIONS.
LUCIUS TOLD ME THE WHOLE STORY.
BECAUSE OF YOU, OUR COMRADES' SACRIFICES WERE KEPT TO A MINIMUM THAT DAY.
...WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT ATTACK?
KUN (SNIFF)
"CHARLATAN" ...
I'D ASSUMED THEY WERE ILLUSIONS, SOMETHING VISIBLE ONLY TO THOSE WHO'D BECOME CURSE-BEARERS. HOWEVER...

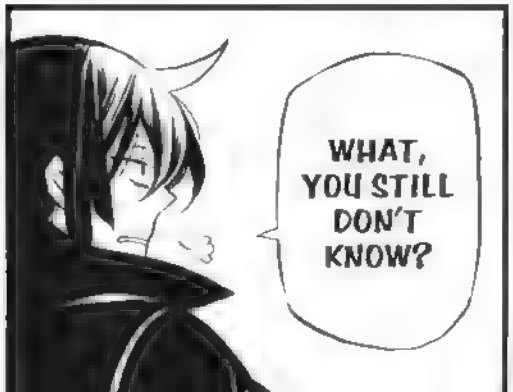
I THINK THE GOAL OF THAT ATTACK MAY HAVE BEEN TO ELIMINATE LUCIUS.

KACHA (CLINK)
AGREED.

!


WHY WOULD THEY BE AFTER LUCA'S LIFE?
UM...BY "LUCIUS," YOU MEAN LUCA, DON'T YOU?

IF NAENIA, THAT BLACK SHADOW, STEALS TRUE NAMES... THEN THERE'S NOTHING ODD ABOUT HAVING FOUR CURSE-BEARERS APPEAR IN THE SAME PLACE.
THEY PROBABLY USED THE CURSE-BEARERS TO CAUSE AN UPROAR IN ORDER TO DIVERT THE EYES OF THE BEASTIA.


WHAT, YOU STILL DON'T KNOW?

THAT BOY HAS RANK AND POWER SECOND ONLY TO THE QUEEN.
THERE MUST BE COUNTLESS PEOPLE WHO THINK HE'S IN THEIR WAY.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, LUCA? NO...
LUCIUS, GRAND DUKE ORIFLAMME?
GRAND... DUKE...
HUH!? GRAND DUKES ARE HER MAJESTY'S CLOSE ADVISERS, AREN'T THEY!?
RIGHT.
THAT'S AMAZING!

NO, IT... IT'S NOT AMAZING. NOTHING LIKE IT.
UNCLE, MY GUARDIAN, HANDLES ALL MY DUTIES AS GRAND DUKE FOR ME.
IN ANY CASE, I HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN OFFICIALLY PRESENTED YET.

YES... UNCLE.
YOU NEED TO BE MORE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR OWN POSITION.

WHEN I HEARD YOU'D CROSSED OVER TO THE HUMAN WORLD WITHOUT LEAVE, MY BLOOD RAN COLD.
DON (PAT)

WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER NOW?
THE CURSE OF THE VAMPIRE OF THE BLUE MOON IS WHY MY OLDER BROTHER IS SUFFERING!

LUCA, IF I RECALL...YOU WERE LOOKING FOR *THE BOOK OF VANITAS* BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO SAVE YOUR OLDER BROTHER, WEREN'T YOU?

COME TO THINK OF IT ...

...AH.

YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT THAT.
I'M TELLING YOU NOT TO SPEAK OF HIS BROTHER.
... WHAT?
I'M SAYING YOU DON'T NEED TO HEAL HIM.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, BOY?
BUT WHY? HE IS A CURSE-BEARER, ISN'T HE?
IN THAT CASE, LET VANITAS MEET HIM AND—

BEING FREED FROM THE CURSE MAY NOT NECESSARILY BRING HAPPINESS TO THE PERSON IN QUESTION.
SALVATION TAKES MANY FORMS.

YOU TWO CAME TO ASK ME ABOUT MY RESEARCH REGARDING CURSE-BEARERS, DIDN'T YOU?
THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT SUBJECT.

...!

ABOUT THE VAMPIRE OF THE BLUE MOON.
ABOUT THE BOOK OF VANITAS.
AND... ABOUT YOU YOURSELF.
THERE'S MUCH I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU AS WELL...
...KIN OF THE BLUE MOON.
WHAT IS IT? GO ON.
...AND SO, LORD RUTHVEN.
I'D LIKE TO START WITH A REQUEST.
GLADLY.
YES. WE SHOULD BE USING OUR TIME TO DISCUSS MORE WORTHWHILE MATTERS.

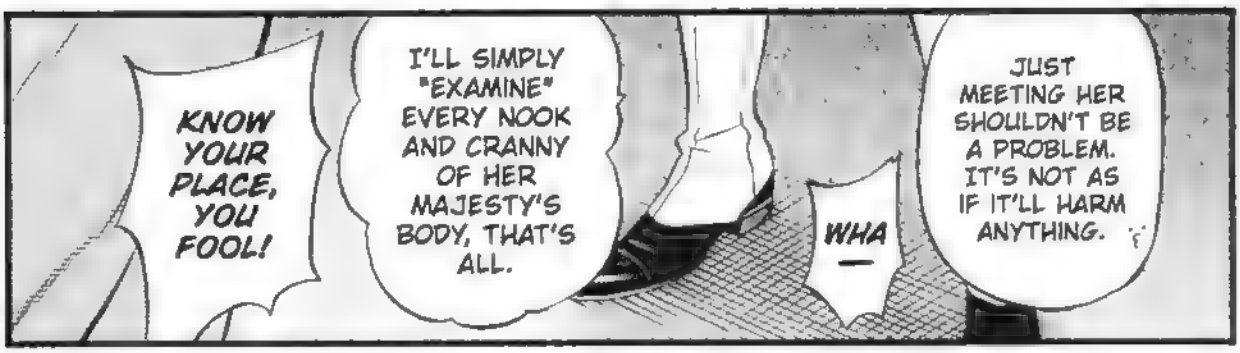
TAKE ME TO YOUR QUEEN.

...WHAT?

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? I TOLD YOU TO TAKE ME TO THE VAMPIRE QUEEN.

...
WHY?
I THINK ...
...THE CAUSE BEHIND THE OUTBREAK OF CURSE-BEARERS LIES IN THE QUEEN.
"WHY?" THAT'S SIMPLE.

...HUMAN!!
DON'T SPOUT NONSENSE...
HUH?
GATA (CLATTER)


KNOW YOUR PLACE, YOU FOOL!
I'LL SIMPLY "EXAMINE" EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY OF HER MAJESTY'S BODY, THAT'S ALL.
WHA—
JUST MEETING HER SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM. IT'S NOT AS IF IT'LL HARM ANYTHING.

HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
IF YOU EXERCISE THE GRAND DUKE'S PRIVILEGES, IT SHOULD BE EASY FOR YOU.
WHAT DO YOU SAY, RUTHVEN? IT'S ALL RIGHT, ISN'T IT?

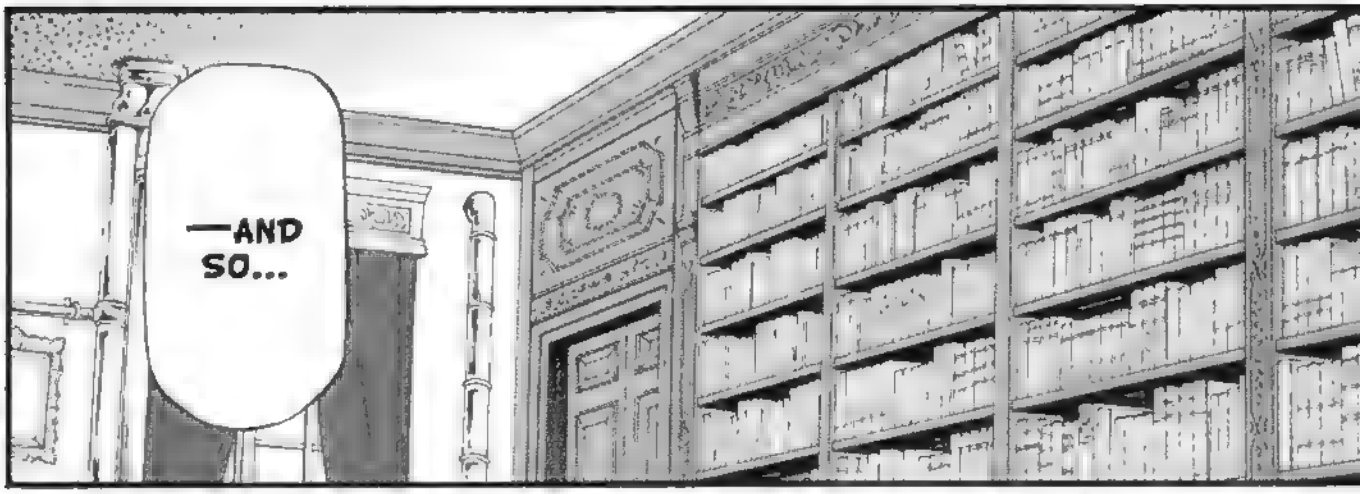
WHY HAS SHE BECOME A *HERMIT?*
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE THE QUEEN WITHDREW FROM THE PUBLIC EYE?

HEH HEH HEH!
IS YOUR QUEEN EVEN STILL ALIVE?
UNC ...
HEH
IN THE FIRST PLACE...
HEH HEH HEH

GET OUT OF ALTUS IMMEDIATELY ...
... HUMAN.
PLEASE, STOP.
UNCLE!
KUFF
KUFF!
...
UNCLE ...
HA
HA

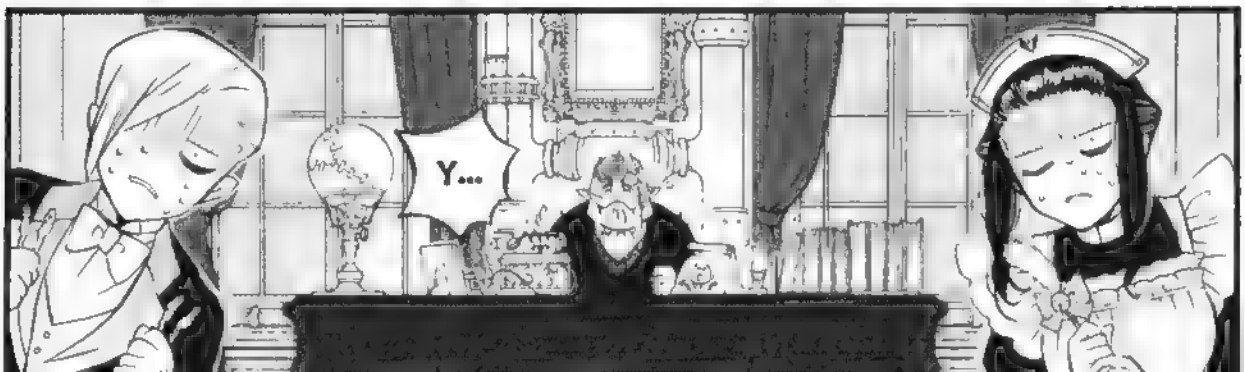
EVERY SINGLE WORD YOU'VE SAID IS BLASPHEMY TOWARD OUR QUEEN.

I WILL NEVER ALLOW YOU TO SET FOOT IN THIS CASTLE AGAIN.


—AND SO...

...THEY BOOTED US INTO THE BORDER BY FORCE.
WE GOT BACK TO THE HUMAN WORLD ABOUT A WEEK AGO!
EVERY BLASTED INCH HURT, SO WE'VE BEEN ASLEEP THE WHOLE TIME!!
THEY SENT MURR BACK THROUGH LATER.

THAT'S THE REPORT.
THERE YOU HAVE IT.


Y...

YOU DAMNED FOOL !!!!
BIRI
BIRI SHUDDER
!?
YOU HAD THE AUDACITY TO— TOWARDS HER MAJESTY!? YOU DARE—!!
PLEASE CALM YOURSELF, MASTER PARKS!
MASTER PARKS!
GO
GO STAGGER
WANNA GO?

I GOT THE INFORMATION I WANTED MOST.
...THIS IS FINE.

IT WAS YOU, LUCIUS.
THAT HUMAN WASN'T LOOKING AT ME.

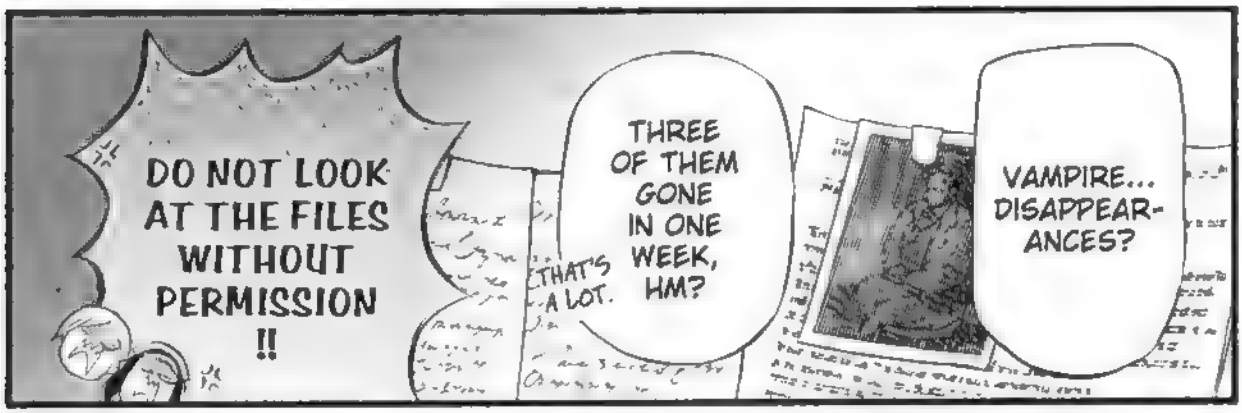
...HE GOT US.
WHAT?

ANY ORDINARY VAMPIRE WOULD HAVE FLOWN INTO A RAGE ON HEARING HER MAJESTY INSULTED LIKE THAT.
... AND YOU SHOULD HAVE.

INSTEAD, YOU...
THAT MOMENT OF AGITATION.
YOU PRACTICALLY CONFIRMED HIS WORDS FOR HIM.

YOUR MAJESTY ...

AND SO...
...UNTIL THIS STORM BLOWS ITSELF OUT, I INTEND TO AVOID ALL CONTACT WITH RUTHVEN...
...AND CONTINUE TREATING CURSE-BEARERS, AS BEFORE.
WHAT...
...SHOULD I...
IN OTHER WORDS: INFORMATION ON CURSE-BEARERS, PLEASE!
ENOUGH OF YOUR INSOLENCE, HUMAN!!
MASTER PARKS DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE ON YOU NOW!
HM? DID SOME-THING ELSE HAPPEN ?


DO NOT LOOK AT THE FILES WITHOUT PERMISSION !!
THAT'S A LOT.
THREE OF THEM GONE IN ONE WEEK, HM?
VAMPIRE... DISAPPEAR-ANCES?

QUACK!
HEY!
DANTE! EXCELLENT TIMING.

YEESH.

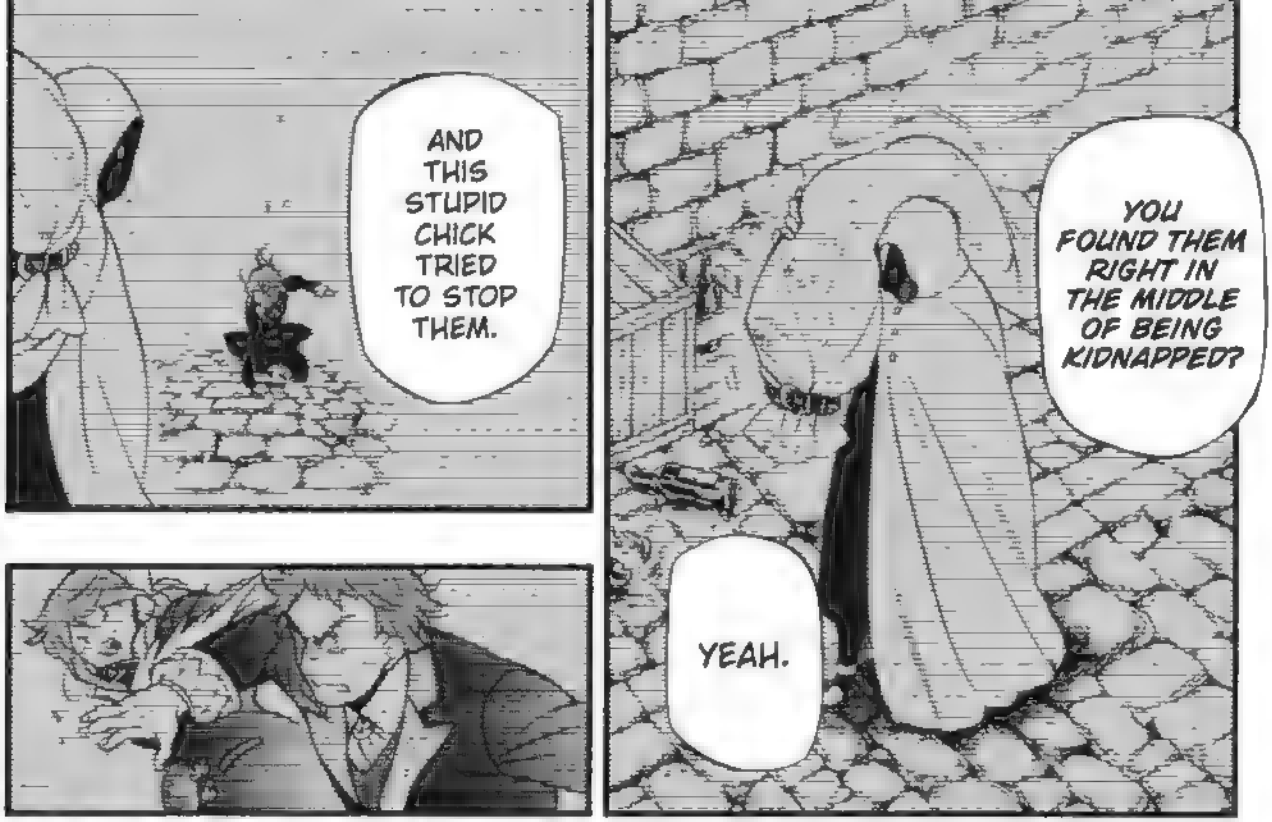
BATAN (SLAM)
GET OUT THIS INSTANT !!!!

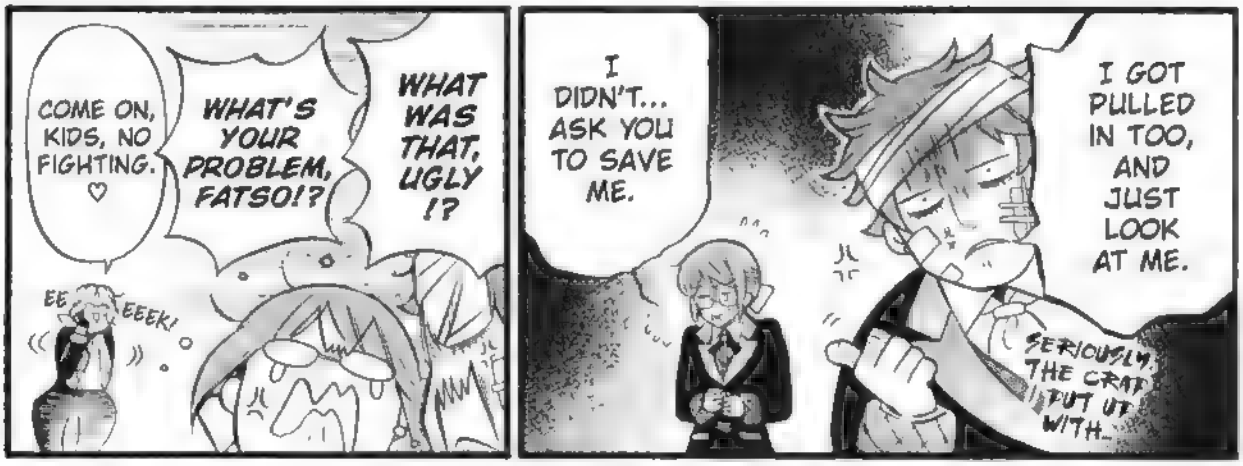
...HANG ON. WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
LEMME ALONE.

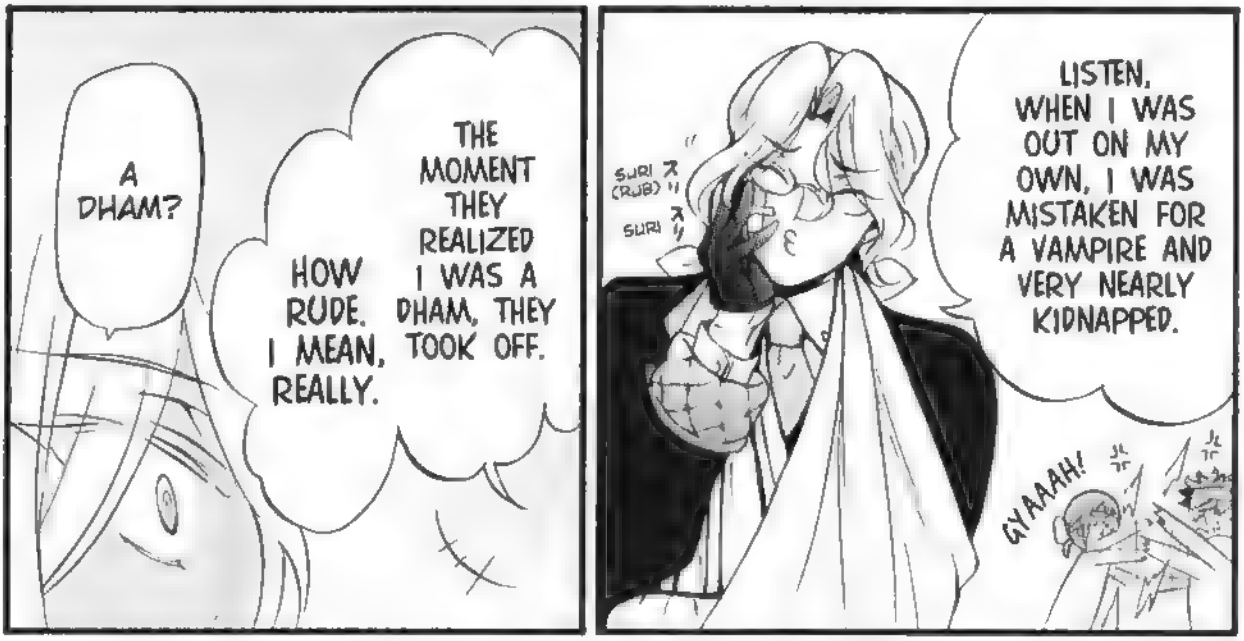
I'M WILLING TO SELL IT TO YOU AS A FAVOR, QUACK!
BUY IT!!

LISTEN UP! I'VE GOT SOME NEW INFO ON CURSE-BEARERS!

AND THEN ...
...WE'D FINALLY PINNED DOWN THE LOCATION OF THIS CURSE-BEARER WHO'D GOTTEN INTO PARIS A LITTLE WHILE BACK.
YESTER-DAY...

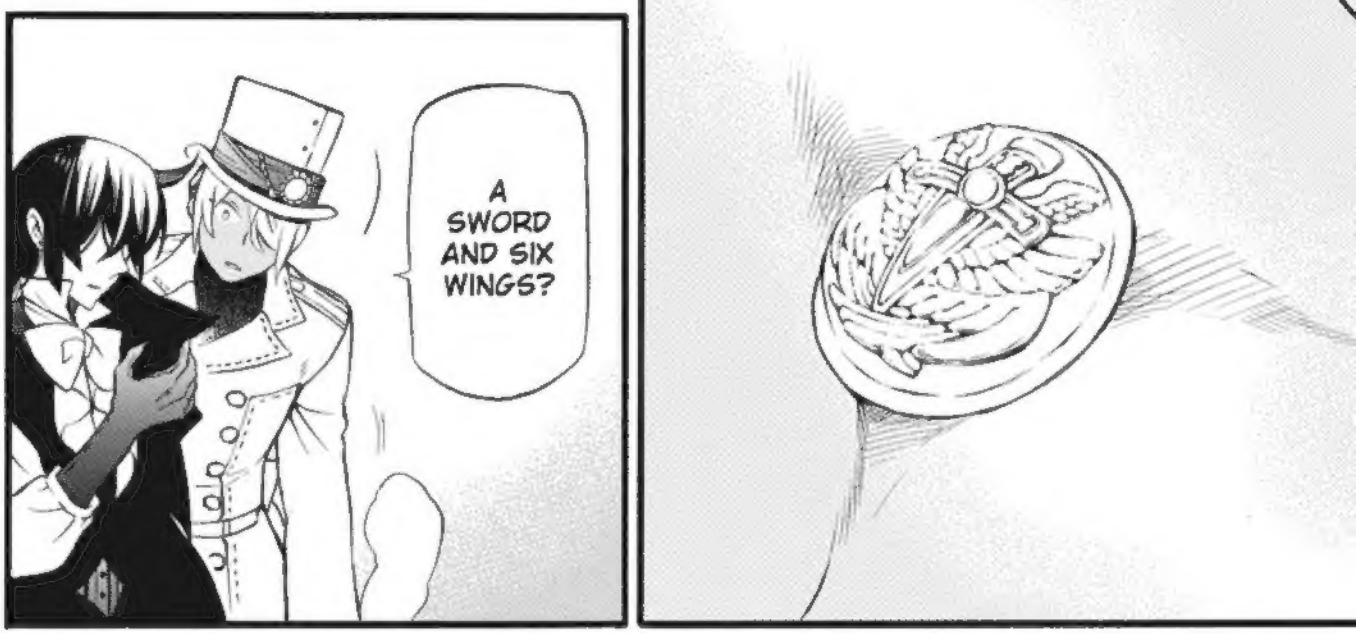

AND THIS STUPID CHICK TRIED TO STOP THEM.
YOU FOUND THEM RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF BEING KIDNAPPED?
YEAH.

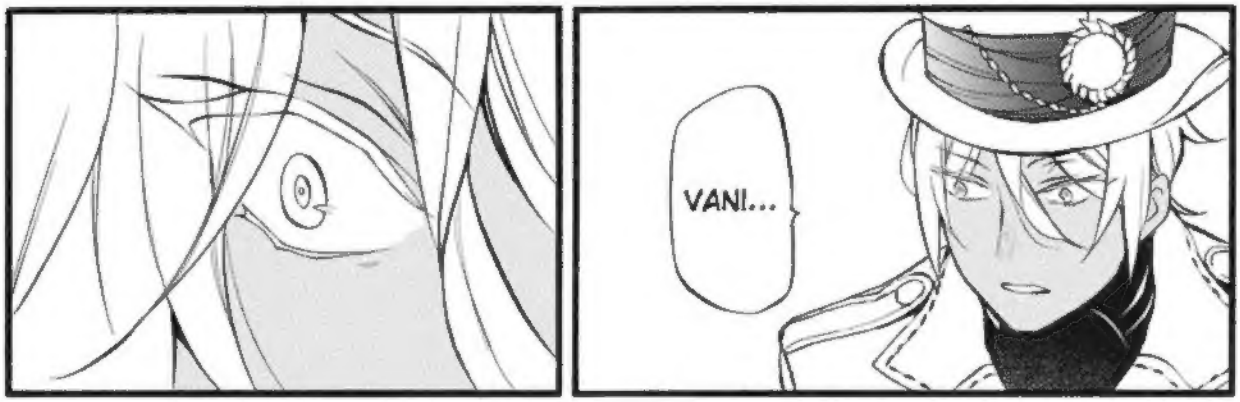

COME ON, KIDS, NO FIGHTING. ♡
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, FATSO!?
WHAT WAS THAT, UGLY!?
EEEEK!
I DIDN'T... ASK YOU TO SAVE ME.
I GOT PULLED IN TOO, AND JUST LOOK AT ME.
SERIOUSLY, THE CRAP I PUT UP WITH...

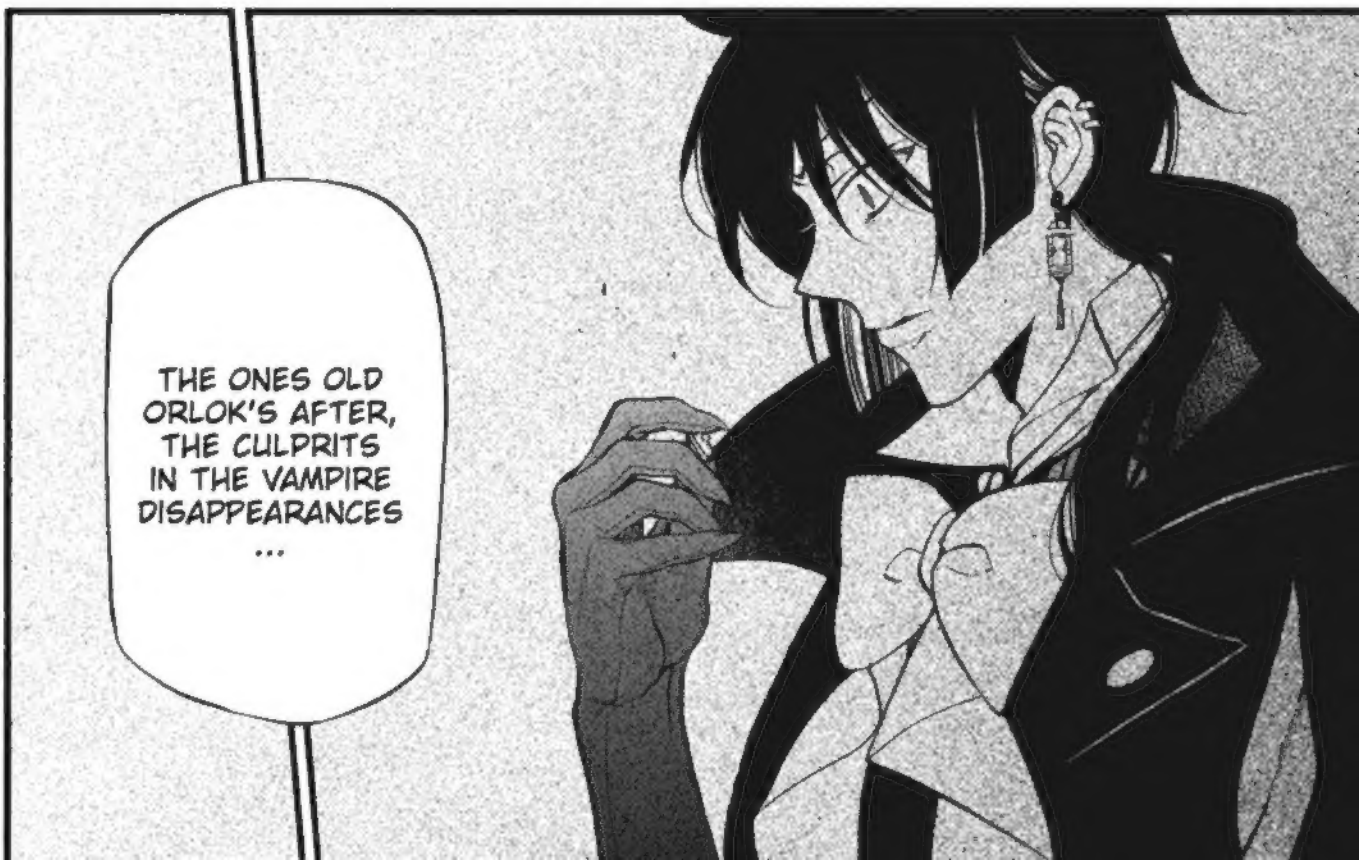

A DHAM?
HOW RUDE. I MEAN, REALLY.
THE MOMENT THEY REALIZED I WAS A DHAM, THEY TOOK OFF.
SURI (RUB)
SURI
LISTEN, WHEN I WAS OUT ON MY OWN, I WAS MISTAKEN FOR A VAMPIRE AND VERY NEARLY KIDNAPPED.
GYAAAH!

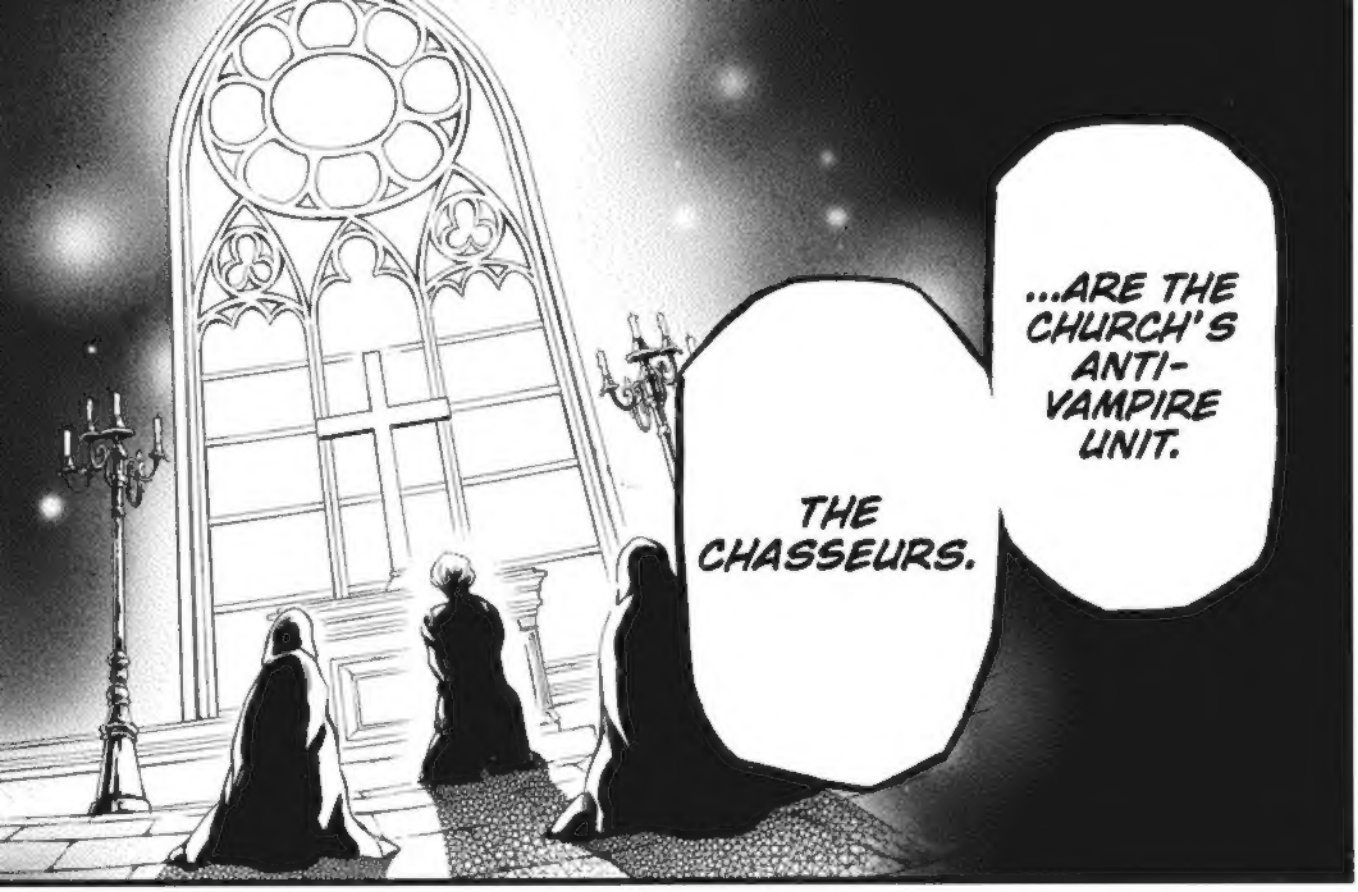
...YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A DHAMPIR BEFORE?
NO.
A HALF-BREED.
WE ALL ARE.

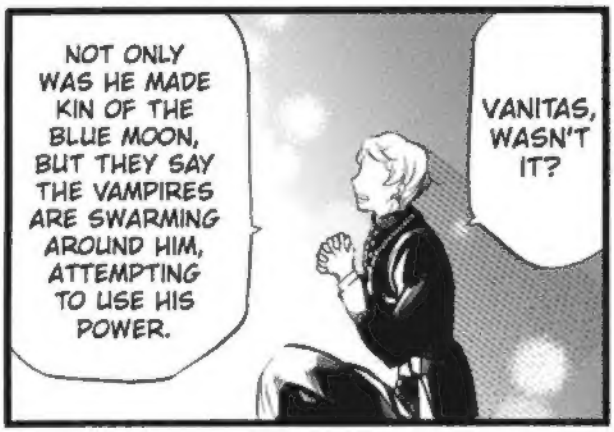
I MANAGED TO RIP A BUTTON OFF THE KIDNAPPER.
?
PASHI (SMACK)
HEY, QUACK.


A SWORD AND SIX WINGS?


VAN!...

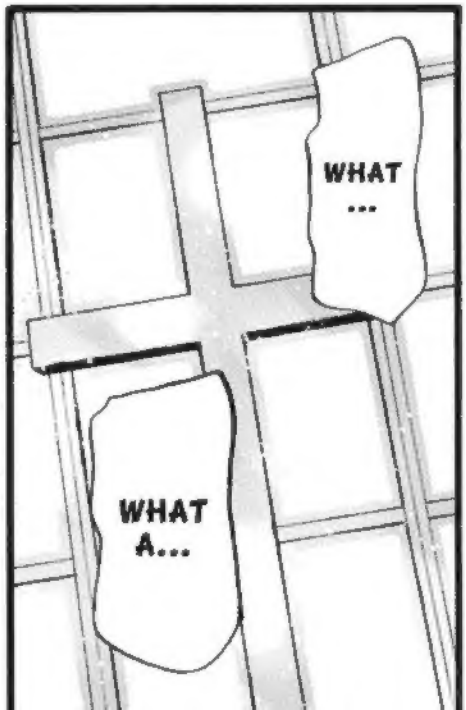

THE ONES OLD ORLOK'S AFTER, THE CULPRITS IN THE VAMPIRE DISAPPEARANCES ...


...ARE THE CHURCH'S ANTI-VAMPIRE UNIT.
THE CHASSEURS.


VANITAS, WASN'T IT?
NOT ONLY WAS HE MADE KIN OF THE BLUE MOON, BUT THEY SAY THE VAMPIRES ARE SWARMING AROUND HIM, ATTEMPTING TO USE HIS POWER.

CAPTAIN... DID YOU HEAR THE RUMOR ABOUT THAT HUMAN?
OF COURSE I DID.

BUWA (TEARS)
ぶわっ
WHAT A POOR, MISERABLE CHILD...!


WHAT...
WHAT A...

IN THE NAME OF GOD, WE ABSO-LUTELY MUST RESCUE HIM!!!!
TO BE CONTINUED...

The Case Study of Vanitas
Chapter 13

Jun Mochizuki

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